

VOICES

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THEY SAID IT: "Crime does not pay ... as well as politics." —Alfred R. Neumann

Colorado Daily

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YOUR TAKE

Change needed in clerk's office

BY AL KOLWICZ

Linda Salas, Boulder County Clerk and Recorder, is up for election.

Salas is responsible for the integrity of our election system. Consequently when she makes decisions that appear to be self-serving, the motivation behind these decisions needs to be questioned by the public.

Salas used more than \$25,000.00 of county funds to print and mail an election brochure. The brochure features a photo of Salas and it aggressively promotes voting by mail. 180,000 copies of the election brochure were printed at a cost of \$4,420.00. Copies of the brochure were mailed to 173,170 Boulder County voters. Postage alone cost \$21,022.73.

The brochure was packaged with a blank absentee ballot application form. These forms are widely available. They can even be printed from the county website. Why were they mailed? There is no provision in Colorado law that authorizes election officials to mail unsolicited absentee ballot applications. The mailing includes information which identifies an eligible voter, so they are a potential candidate for identity theft.

The application forms appear to be flawed. A mandatory field is missing. The law says, "If the application is made for a primary election ballot, the application shall name the political party with which the applicant is affiliated or wishes to affili-

ate." There is no place on the form for this data. Does this mean that all of these applications will be voided?

Salas appears to have a strategy to get as many people as possible to vote by mail. Studies have reported that voting by mail is the least secure and least accurate method of voting. Mail voting has been shown to be fraud and error filled. Ballots can be lost or stolen. Because of lax controls, people can switch ballots and vote in contests outside of their own district. One member of a household can vote the ballot of another — say the ballot of a college student, or somebody who has moved.

Claims that signature verification prevents this are not verifiable. There are no standards for the temporary workers who perform this task, under Salas' direction. What proof is there that workers can detect whether the eligible voter, a forger, or a computer printer "signed" the document.

Is it to benefit her campaign, or to cover up her poor choice of ballot counting equipment that Salas is promoting absentee ballots? By encouraging people to vote by mail, the optical scanning workload will be spread out over weeks. This will conceal some of the inadequacies of the optical scanning system. However, absentee ballots cost much more to process than ballots cast in precincts.

One must ask why Salas promotes voting by mail when it is less secure, less accurate, and much more expensive.

Salas has steadfastly refused to abide by Colorado's constitutional requirement for anonymous voting. This year, Salas was given a choice by Hart InterCivic, the voting equipment supplier.

For \$3,500.00 extra, Salas could have chosen to comply with the constitution by printing all uniquely identifying marks on a removable ballot stub. \$3,500.00 is a relatively tiny amount to pay to comply with the constitution — especially considering that Salas wasted more than \$25,000.00 mailing her brochure.

Predictably, Salas rejected the anonymous ballot option. Once again Boulder County voters will be forced to vote using ballots that violate the Colorado Constitution. They are not secret or anonymous.

People who care about freedom should pay close attention to what has happened during the Salas administration. We have lost anonymous voting and the ability to verify that elections are secure and accurate. We have gained expensive voting equipment that cannot be verified, and that does not count reliably. And we have been forced to live with an administration that is unaccountable, secretive and arbitrary.

It's time for a change. Don't forget to vote in the Aug. 8 primary election.

Al Kolwicz is a local voting rights advocate and activist. The views expressed here are his alone, and not necessarily those of the Colorado Daily management or staff.